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*The Writings of Samuel Adams.* Edited by HARRY ALONZO CUSHING. Volume I. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1904. Pp. xiv, 447.)

THE editor of this volume properly says in the preface that the writings of no one of the leaders of the American Revolution form a more complete expression of the causes and justification of that movement than do the writings of Samuel Adams. Such a collection has long been needed for the study of the movements of the decade before the battle of Lexington, as the only available material was to be found in the three-volume *Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams* (1865), by his great-grandson, William V. Wells. Of course much of the material available for the edition of the writings was to be found in such volumes as the *Massachusetts State Papers*, and doubtless Bancroft made use of many if not most of the materials that are here gathered together; for the papers collected by Samuel Adams Wells, which formed the basis of the *Life* by William V. Wells, were transferred to Bancroft, and on the death of the historian went to the Lenox Library. The student and the reader of the Revolutionary era, however, has had to take much for granted and has not had the opportunity of examining critically the work of the foremost democratic leader of the great democratic movement of the last century. We now have the promise of a collection of the most important public papers, carefully edited and printed in the attractive form in which the writings of other American statesmen have been published by the Putnams.

The present volume covers the period from 1765 to 1769, inclusive. We are given nothing before the date of the Stamp Act, except one paper dated May, 1764—the instructions of the town of Boston to its representatives in the general court. It is true that the worshipful diligence of Wells did not unearth much of importance for the early years of Adams's career; but the two or three things which Wells did print are perhaps worth including in any collection of Samuel Adams's writings. Nearly all the papers in this volume are of a distinctly public character. Probably, as the editor says, prudence as well as necessity dictated the destruction of many of Adams's papers, but it seems strange that almost no letters of a personal character worthy of publication have been discovered, and almost no letters written in an informal, friendly way on matters of public concern and interest—such letters as are found in abundance in the writings of Madison, Jefferson, and Washington. This failure to discover such material is presumably not to be attributed to any negligence on the part of the editor, but in itself helps to characterize the character and conduct of Adams. The townspeople of Boston were his correspondents, and he addressed them with frankness, suggestion, irony, insinuation, and semi-serious, heavily-laden humor in the pages of the newspapers of the day, which were largely made up of contributed articles of this kind and plenteous advertisements.

The papers presented in this volume are brought together from many places. Some come from the manuscript collections of the Earl of Dartmouth, some from the collections in the Lenox Library, some from the *Massachusetts State Papers*, some from the *Life* by Wells, some from the *Prior Documents* and other printed sources. Mr. Cushing has had the task of gathering his material as well as editing it. The patience used in gathering the writings is evident, but it is plain too that the editor has undertaken a task more puzzling than that confronting any other of those that have edited the writings of the early statesmen. The editors of the writings of Washington, Madison, Jefferson, and Monroe found themselves troubled with an embarrassment of manuscript riches, from which they could select the most significant papers. Mr. Cushing has had to seek for his materials. He has had moreover the task of determining whether papers commonly attributed to Adams were really the handiwork of the great radical or have simply been attributed to him by admiring patriots and by reverential descendants. How carefully this work has been done we are not allowed to know. For example, on page 166 we are informed only that a paper appears in *Prior Documents*; numerous articles are printed from the Boston newspapers, absolutely without editorial comment. It is easy enough to gather from Wells that every trenchant newspaper communication came from the irreconcilable Adams and that every report from a committee of which he was a member was written by the fluent pen of this first among American politicians. But in volumes such as these we are entitled to a short statement of the evidence on which the authenticity of a paper is decided. When any one of the documents here inserted is not copied from the manuscript, and when the whereabouts of the original manuscript is unknown, it is incumbent on the editor to give the reason for including the papers. In many cases he may be able only to say that the article has been commonly attributed to Adams or that it bears the marks of his hands, but that much at least we are entitled to.

The whole history of Adams is affected in large degree by the questions here stated. Much applause has been given him for his acumen and his persistence; and in some measure this reputation and our estimate of him rest on his papers and his letters to the press; and yet the authorship of many of these letters seems to be inferred only from the fact that Adams was persistent and acute. Of course that sort of reasoning can go on forever, and any one of us could be made out the greatest of men. Everything included here is so desirable for an understanding of the Revolutionary movement that the reviewer has not the courage to advise the omission of papers the authenticity of which is in doubt, but he does express the desire that succeeding volumes will make plain the basis of inclusion and that work of such importance as this should not be subjected to so serious a criticism.